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SUBJECT: COTE D IVOIRE FINES STRIKING PHYSICIANS

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11. (U) The Government of Cote d Ivoire decided on September 20 to suspend the September salary of the leaders of the union representing physicians, the Syndicat National des Cadres Superieurs de la Santede Cote d Ivoire (SYNACASS-CI), which organized a strike by public sector physicians September 4-13 (See reftel). Physicians and trainees who went on strike will have their salaries reduced by half this month. The government said the union's behavior was in violation of strike procedures that provide for the provision of minimum services in the public sector during strikes. The government has also warned that any similar actions in the future will result in dismissal of civil servants.

12. (SBU) The government's decisive attitude in addressing the physicians' strike was replicated in recent days in its firm stance to successfully avert a strike by court clerks. A strike by the clerks would have derailed the "audiences foraines" (tribunals to issue birth certificates to those who never had them or lost them) process that began September 25 and which is a crucial step in implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Accord. Both groups of strikers seem to have understood that the government has come together and is willing to use rolling dismissals to prevail. In coming weeks, observers will closely watch whether the united stance adopted by the President and Prime Minister in addressing strikes manifests itself in other instances.

AKUETTEH